

1 Timothy 1:1-20 (Personal Charge)

Prayer. (The class outline is included at the end of this lesson.) Printout for class.

I. Opening of Letter

- **READ** all of Chapter 1.
- As was typical in ancient Greece, **letters** typically began with three components: the sender's name, the recipient(s) 's name, and a greeting.
- There are 13 New Testament letters attributed to the Apostle Paul. The greetings could take various forms, but they always have these three components at minimum.
- Also, all his letters, **except Philippians and Philemon**, start by reminding the reader that Paul is an **apostle** of Christ Jesus.
- That was very significant! By this title, Paul could claim to be the Lord's personally chosen ambassador, charged with bearing witness to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is a witness to the good news (the Gospel) of salvation by grace through faith.
- In other words, this **was not just any letter. It has full apostolic authority and must be received as divine revelation.**
- Listen to how the Apostle Paul opens his letter to the church in Galatia. He writes, **"Paul, an apostle, not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father."**
- It is the same in 1 Timothy! Like in the letter to Galatia, Paul wanted people to know that his calling as an apostle was from God **and that God will sovereignly determine his actions.**
- He became an apostle by the **command of God!** The word **command** in the original language **stresses authority.**
- The word was used when a **royal order or degree was given.** It was a strong **mandate or order. In this case, not from a man but from God.**
- This was perhaps to a degree like receiving a letter from the president or some important official. It would be considered a **very weighty letter, and you would pay careful attention!**

- Now Timothy, of course, knew that Paul was an apostle and didn't need a reminder of Paul's credentials.
- So why is it so important for the Apostle to state his credentials?
- Could it be that the letter was **ultimately for the entire church at Ephesus and even beyond, meant to be read out loud to everyone?**
- There are a couple of additional aspects in the opening to briefly notice. Two points, really. Paul identifies two sources of the command:
 - 1) The apostle first **looks back** at what God has done. **Source one:** God, our Savior.
 - 2) Then, he **looks forward** to what is ahead. **Source two:** Christ Jesus, our hope.
- First, looking back, Paul was always mindful of and rejoiced in the fact that God redeemed him and paid the ransom price for his sins.
- In verses 12-17 of this chapter, we will see Paul rejoicing in the grace of the Lord and how it overflowed to him with faith and love in Christ Jesus.
- Let us do likewise! If we know Jesus, let us marvel at the grace and love he has shown to poor sinners like us!
- Along with this, Paul was looking ahead in the hope of Christ. I believe this is likely referring to the **return of the Lord in His second coming.**
- We will see this in the letter to Titus. In Titus 2:13, the Apostle writes that we are "waiting for our **blessed hope**, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ."

II. False Teaching

- We could say more about the opening two verses, but I want to focus on the major theme of this letter.
- Immediately after the opening two verses, the Apostle Paul gets **right to the purpose** of his letter to Timothy: to warn Timothy **about false teachers in Ephesus.**
- As a result, we can see that this is a very urgent matter! God's authoritative truth is at stake! Never a small matter!

- **The charge mentioned in verse three is based on Paul's apostolic authority. Perhaps the word "command" is better!**
- Timothy must **deal with this urgent challenge** due to the false teachings at Ephesus.
- One can say, and our study will show us, that **the whole letter is a response to the presence of false teachers in a very real sense.**
- **Who are these false teachers?** We can say with reasonable confidence that they **are NOT from outside** the church. In fact, it is quite likely that they were teachers, **perhaps even elders, from within the church!**
- **I say this for at least two reasons:**
 - 1) **First**, Paul writes that certain persons must not teach different doctrines or be teachers of the law.

The point is that appointed elders were teachers within the church at Ephesus, and indeed, as a rule in the early NT church, one of the elders' roles, which we will see in chapter three.

So, the certain persons in there were likely elders.

- 2) **Secondly, remember Acts chapter 20** and Paul's parting words to some of the very same Ephesian Elders. **Turn there, please. READ 20:28-30 "from among your own selves."**
- So, **some five years later, the "wolves" (false teachers) appeared** in Ephesus.
 - **John Stott's commentary on the Pastoral Letters** tells us that three common characteristics of false teaching always occur whenever there is a deviation from the truth of Scripture.
 - We must be able to recognize these to detect and avoid false teachers and, therefore, false teaching! The Apostle Paul gives them to us. They are:
 - 1) **The nature of the false teaching.**
 - 2) **The results that come from false teaching.**
 - 3) **The basic fundamental cause of false teaching.**
 - It will be helpful for us to consider these three aspects of false teaching.

A) Starting with the essential nature of false teaching.

- What is the substance of this false teaching? The Apostle tells us. He says these teachers **must not teach any different doctrine** in verse 3.

- In the original Greek, these five English words, **“to teach any different doctrine,”** is **only one Greek verb**.
- What is of interest is that the Greek word Paul uses **is NOT** found in any other literature of that era other than in Paul’s letters. We see the same word again in chapter 6 verse 3. **“If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ....”**
- So, in essence, Paul created a new word!
- Here is the crucial thing. The **common characteristic or essential nature of false teaching** is that it is **always a deviation from the original revelation of the Word of God**.
- There is only one solution to false teaching. **STOP it! END IT!! That is the charge the Apostle gives to Timothy**.
- This different doctrine, or false teaching, is **like a poisonous snake that somehow got into your house!** What do you do with it? You find a way to get rid of it immediately!
- This is precisely what Paul instructs Timothy to do. **Whoever these “certain persons” are in verses 3 and 6, they must be gotten rid of!** Must be silenced!
- **That is your charge, Timothy!** That is **our charge** if we want to lead God’s people.
- We should notice that if there is a **“different doctrine,”** the implication, or reverse, is that there **must be good, pure, sound doctrine**.
- Look at verse 10. There is a list of evil practices, but then Paul says, “Whatever else is contrary to **sound** doctrine.”
- This **word translates to “sound”** from Greek, **meaning “healthy”**. To be well physically and mentally.
- Paul **uses the same word again in chapter 6:3**. We just read it: “If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the **sound words** of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, " we must teach the **sound, healthy words of Christ and the apostolic witness!**
- **This was the Apostle’s concern from the beginning to the end of his ministry.** In Galatians, possibly the first epistle Paul wrote, in chapter 1, verse 6, listen to what he wrote.

- **“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel, not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.”**
- To summarize. The **nature of false teaching is ALWAYS a deviation (Different Teaching) from the revealed truth of Holy Scripture!**
- If you plan to teach God’s people, teach Holy Scripture! No your opinions about world events, myths, etc. **Teach the Word of the Lord Jesus Christ! With that, you will have the help and aid of the Holy Spirit!**
- The early church fought tooth and nail against heresy, which is nothing but a different doctrine. **That is why we have a canon of Scripture.**
- The word Canon means a **measuring rod**. It is like a carpenter’s ruler or measuring tape.
- The early church saw the need for a rule to measure what is **sound** (healthy) doctrine!
- They used the recorded words of Christ and the **apostolic witness to determine what is sound versus different doctrines.**
- **Led by the Holy Spirit, they could finalize the New Testament canon of Scripture.**
- Sadly, and we grieve because of it, so many churches—at least, I can speak of so many churches in America—have abandoned **“sound” healthy teaching** and **embraced the spirit of the age, which has rejected absolute truth.**

B) The Terrible Results, or Fruits, of False Teaching

- Next, we need to think of the results from false teaching. I will point out two.

1) Fruit of Speculation

- The first, looking at verse 4, is **“speculation”**. What were the false teachers doing?
- As we said, they were teaching a different doctrine and **devoting “themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculation rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.”**

- Many scholars believe that the myths and genealogies Paul references were likely **fanciful fables taken from the Old Testament**. They may have been strange interpretations of the Mosaic law.
- The apostle **mentions this in verse 7**. They wanted to be “**teachers of the law, “but their teaching generally did not reflect the true meaning of the biblical text!**”
- When we get to Titus, we will see in the first chapter the Apostle **instructing Titus about false teachers who were devoting themselves to “Jewish myths.”**
- We can’t say for sure, but **perhaps the false teachers at Ephesus and Crete shared similar content!**
- This kind of teaching only leads to debates and separation within the body of **Christ instead of building up fellow believers in faith and love,** which is **ALWAYS the objective when we teach the Word of God.**
- Paul tells us the “aim” or objective of teaching the pure doctrine of the gospel of Christ. It is NOT speculation.
- What is it? Verse 5: “**The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.**”
- **False teaching always leads to speculation. The gospel of God’s grace, taught with the help of the Spirit of God, leads to love and faith.**

2) Fruit of Division

- That brings us to **the second fruit of false teaching: speculation and division** in the church. The word “division” is not mentioned in chapter one, but it is very much implied.
- Paul explicitly informs us in chapter 6 that false teaching directly results in **division or dissension. Let’s take a look at that passage 6:3-5.**
- **Envy, dissension, constant friction, slander, evil suspicions. The very opposite of love and a sincere faith** which comes from the truth of Scripture!

C) The Primary Cause False Teaching

- The **third and last characteristic of false teaching to consider is the CAUSE.**
- At least in the Ephesus context, the cause is directly related to rejecting a good conscience. Sinful unbelief is at the root of it!

- Look at verse 6 again. “**Certain persons**” (false teachers) have swerved away from something. **What?**
- What are the “**these**” that the apostle discusses in this verse?
- Well, you must go to the **prior verse**. They **have swerved or left a straight path** and “wandered away, from a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith.”
- That word swerve in the ESV means miss the mark! Which is a short, accurate definition of sin. God’s holy law is the mark, and we have ALL missed it!
- This is what unconfessed and unrepentant sin does! **It sears the conscience.** After repeatedly sinning and not turning to God for forgiveness, one’s heart is so hard that they are **no longer sensitive to God and His truth. Full of unbelief!**

D) The charge and exhortation renewed (18-20)

- Paul repeats the importance of **maintaining a good conscience** later in this chapter. In other words, **he returns to this topic towards the end of the chapter. Look at 1:18-20. READ it.**
- In **this section**, the apostle concludes his argument about false teachers, at least for now.
- **Verse 19. Two things. Hold on to, at all costs, to what? Faith and a good conscience!**
- We must fight this battle if we want to serve God in His church. **You must wage a good war! How do we do that? Paul tells us! Faith and a good conscience**
- Verse 19 tells us that these two men, Hymenaeus and Alexander, rejected faith and a clear conscience!
- Look at the result! **Their hearts hardened, and ultimately, they were removed from their role as leaders and, even worse, from the church fellowship!**
- Paul says they made shipwreck of their faith!
- Read paragraph on Page 46 Stott.
- In his commentary on this section in the Pastoral Letters, John Calvin wrote that a “**bad conscience is the mother of all heresies.**”

- Brethren, **when we have unconfessed sin**, make no mistake; we are opening ourselves to the deception of the enemy of our souls, Satan. **That was the case here in Ephesus.**
- Quick Summary. **Three things you should remember about false teaching.**
- 1) There is always some deviation from God's revealed truth. 2) This leads to speculation instead of faith, and division instead of love, and 3) the cause is a conscience hardened due to sin!

III The Law of God and the Gospel of God (Time check good breaking point)

The Law

- We are now shifting gears to the second part of this lesson. We must consider what the Apostle Paul writes about the Law of God and the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Following our outline, **we have two considerations:**
- A) What Paul tells us about the Law (V.6-11), B) Second what Paul tells us about the Gospel, (V12-17)
- **First, Paul tells us about the law.** We should notice that **verse 7 sets the occasion for verse 8.** The false teachers wanted to teach God's law—or at least they thought they did!
- READ Verse 7. **“Desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.”**
- From this passage, we see **teachers whose teaching ends in speculation and division. Paul says they simply have no idea what they are teaching!**
- Then, starting in verse 8, **the Apostle somewhat, not wholly, changes subjects.**
- **You will often find this in Paul's writings. He temporarily digresses but ultimately returns to his original theme—which he does in verse 18 when he returns to the charge!**
- Since he mentions the law in verses 7 and 8-11, **he wants to clarify its purpose or function. Then, verses 12-17 (which we will get to) describe Paul's own experience and how God was gracious to him and to sinners in general.**

- **READ verses 8-11.**
- **The Apostle tells us that the law of God is good and is meant to reveal to humanity their sin, thus driving them to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy forgiveness.**
- **Unfortunately, the false teachers in Ephesus did not use the law correctly. They wanted to impress people with their fanciful myths, allegories, and interpretations.**
- **Writing to the church of Rome, Paul clearly demonstrates the importance of the law through his own personal experience.**
- **He writes to the Roman church in chapter 7 verse 7: What then shall we say? That the law is sin? (In powerful Greek language Paul writes (μὴ γένοιτο) By no means! Or, in some translations, may it never be! Yet, I would not have known sin if it had not been for the law. For I would not have known what it is to covet (10th commandment) if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.”**
- **Reformed theology teaches that there are three uses of the law of God. It would be good for you to learn these (sometimes you will find different orders given):**
- **Its first function is to be a mirror that reflects both God’s perfect righteousness and our own sinful shortcomings.**
- **Saint Augustine, a great theologian from the 4th century, wrote, " The law bids us, as we try to fulfill its requirements and become wearied in our weakness under it, to know how to ask the help of grace."**
- **In this usage, God’s law is meant to give us the knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20; 4:15; 5:13; 7:7-11). Romans 3:20 is a classic text for this. “For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.”**
- **It shows us our need for pardon and our danger of damnation so that it may lead us to repentance and faith in Christ (Gal. 3:19-24).**
- **This is sometimes called the condemning use of the law. Quoting Martin Luther, the great reformer, about this usage of the Law he wrote. “It is a mighty ‘hammer’ to crush the self-righteousness of human beings. For ‘it shows them their sin, so that by recognizing sin they may be humbled, frightened, and worn down, and so may long for grace and for the Blessed Offspring [sc. Christ]. It is in this sense that the ‘law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ’ (Gal.3:24, AV)**

- A **second function of the law is to restrain evil**. Although the **law cannot change the heart**, it **can, to some extent, inhibit lawlessness through its threats of judgment and punishment**. This is known as **the restraining use of the law** (Romans 13:3, 4).
- The **third function** of the law is to **guide Christians into the good works** that God has planned for them (Eph. 2:10). This is known as **the sanctifying use of the law**, where the law tells God's people what will please their heavenly Father.
- Jesus was speaking of this third use of the law when He said that those who become His disciples must be taught to do all that He had commanded (Matt. 28:20), and that obedience to His commands will prove the reality of one's love for Him (John 14:15). **The Christian is free from the law as a system of salvation** (Rom. 6:14; 7:4, 6; 1 Cor. 9:20; Gal. 2:15-19, 3:25), but is **"under the law of Christ" as a rule, or guide for one's life** (1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2).
- The famous reformer **John Calvin** was referring to this use of the law when he wrote:
- The law is **'the best instrument'** both to teach us the Lord's will and to exhort us to do it. For 'by frequent meditation upon it' believers will 'be aroused to obedience, be strengthened in it, and be drawn back from the slippery path of transgression'. Indeed, it is in this 'joyous obedience' that authentic 'Christian freedom' is to be found.
- In **summary, the law has three uses: condemning, restraining, and sanctifying**. Know those three.
- **What use is Paul using in verses 8-11? Condemning!**

The Gospel of Grace

- In the remaining minutes, we need to **move from Paul's instruction on the condemning use of the law and how it exposes sin to God's gracious solution**.
- **Namely, the good news of salvation in the LORD Jesus Christ! The Gospel of God!**
- **Read Verses 12-17 again.**
- As is common in the Apostle Paul's letters, **he makes a very personal statement about salvation freely given apart from law. He gives us his testimony.**
- The **thanksgiving that is typical of the start of the Apostle's letters but was missing in the opening is given here.**

- When he turns now to the Gospel of God, he begins with **thankfulness and ends (in verse 17) with praise!** “**To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.**”
- Paul is using himself and his experience of God’s grace to **highlight the difference between himself and the false teachers!**
- In other words, in his testimony, **he serves as a model of a sinner saved by grace!** Completely different than the false teachers!
- One commentator, Philip Towner, wrote something that stuck with me when I read it. It seems to be right to the point.
- “Paul contrasts himself with the false teachers of the law who have no understanding of what they are asserting, having rejected the faith; while Paul **acting in ignorance was met with God’s mercy while he was in unbelief**”
- What a difference! Teaching “different doctrines” leads to speculation and division.
- However, the **grace of God in Jesus Christ**, despite being a “blasphemer and persecutor,” **led to Paul’s salvation**. This, in turn, leads to thanksgiving and praise to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords!
- Verse 15 is perhaps **one of the best-known gospel passages that reveals the grace of God to all mankind in Jesus**. Perhaps on par with John 3:16- no doubt many of you have it memorized!
- “**This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am foremost.**” 1:15
- These words are very similar to what Jesus said to Zacchaeus in Luke 19:10: “**The Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost.**”
- This passage shows the **global nature of evangelism**. Jesus came into the **world**, and the Gospel of Christ is a message for all people, regardless of ethnic background, gender, age, etc. Christ died for sinners, and we are all sinners!
- It should be noted that this verse is the **first of five “trustworthy” sayings** in the Pastoral letters. We will see these again. It is one of Paul’s favorite phrases.
- Some commentators believe the “**trustworthy saying**” was part of a **creed** in the early church or perhaps used as part of the **liturgy** in worship services. The word in Greek **means “a faithful word.” It is 100% beyond doubt!**

- This passage concludes with a wonderful doxology, or praise to God!
- It began with thanksgiving, and from there, Paul's emotions took off as he recalled **the mercy and grace found in our blessed savior!**
- How else could it possibly end but with praise and glory to God?
- **To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen**
- Prayer

I Timothy: 1-20 - Outline

I. Opening (1:1-2)

- a) Salutation
 - i. Credentials
 - ii. Reflection on the past
 - iii. A glimpse of what's ahead

II. False Teaching (1:3-6,18-20)

- a) The substance of false teaching: deviation from sound doctrine (1:3-4)
- b) The result of false teaching (1:4-5)
 - i. Useless speculation rather than God's revelation
 - ii. Division and dissension rather than love
- c) The cause of false teaching: a bad conscience (1:6)
- d) The charge and exhortation renewed (18-20)

III. The Law and the Gospel (1:7-17)

a) What Paul says of the Law (1:7-11)

i. The wrong use of the Law (1:7)

ii. The right purpose of the Law (1:8-11)

iii. Three usages of the Law in reformed theology

b) What Paul says of the Gospel

i. Personal testimony (1:12-14)

ii. Grace to all mankind in Christ Jesus (1:15-16)

iii. Doxology to the God of grace (1:17)